

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 IO-15 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4306

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 11149

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR, IT, SF, UK, MASS

SUBJECT: BRITISH VIEWS ON AERMACCHI JETS FOR SOUTH

AFRICA

REF: ROME 10200

1. MICHAEL COOK, SOUTH AFRICAN DESK OFFICER AT FCO, COMMENTING ON PRESS ALLEGATIONS THAT HMG HAD CONCURRED IN THE SUPPLY OF ROLLS ROYCE AIRCRAFT ENGINES TO PIAGGIO FOR AERMACCHI ADVANCED MILITARY TRAINERS DESTINED FOR THE SOUTH AFRICAN AIR FORCE, SAID THAT BRITISH GOVERNMENT HAD NOT BEEN INVOLVED IN ANY WAY.

2. SUCH AN ALLEGATION WAS INCLUDED IN A STORY BY COLIN LEGUM IN SEPTEMBER 23 EDITION OF "THE OBSERVER". ACCORDING TO LEGUM, AERMACCHI WOULD SELL AT LEAST 50 ADVANCED MILITARY TRAINERS TO THE SOUTH AFRICAN AIR FORCE. THESE TRAINERS WOULD BE EQUIPPED WITH ROLLS ROYCE VIPER 632

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TURBO-JET ENGINE, WHICH IS BEING DEVELOPED IN COLLABORA-

TION WITH FIAT. IT IS MANUFACTURED UNDER THE ROLLS ROYCE LICENSE BY PIAGGIO, WHICH IS IN TURN CONTROLLED BY FIAT.

3. LEGUM CONTENTS THAT WHEN THE ROLLS ROYCE LICENSE RIGHTS WERE GRANTED TO PIAGGIO, THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT INSISTED ON A CLAUSE THAT PLANES EQUIPPED WITH THE VIPER WOULD NOT BE SOLD TO SOUTH AFRICA. ACCORDING TO COOK, THE ROLLS ROYCE LICENSE RIGHTS WERE GRANTED TO PIAGGIO IN 1960, BEFORE THE RESTRICTIONS ON MILITARY SALES TO SOUTH AFRICA WENT INTO EFFECT, AND NO CONDITIONS WERE ATTACHED TO THE LICENSING AGREEMENT. THERE HAVE BEEN NO CHANGES IN THE AGREEMENT SINCE THEN. THE BRITISH REGARD ROLLS ROYCE AS A COMMERCIAL FIRM WITH THE RIGHT TO SELL ITS PRODUCTS ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD. CONTROL OF THE SALE OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT TO SOUTH AFRICA IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT IN THE BRITISH VIEW AND HMG DOES NOT INTEND TO INTERVENE WITH REGARD TO THE MANUFACTURE OF ROLLS ROYCE ENGINES IN ITALY.

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